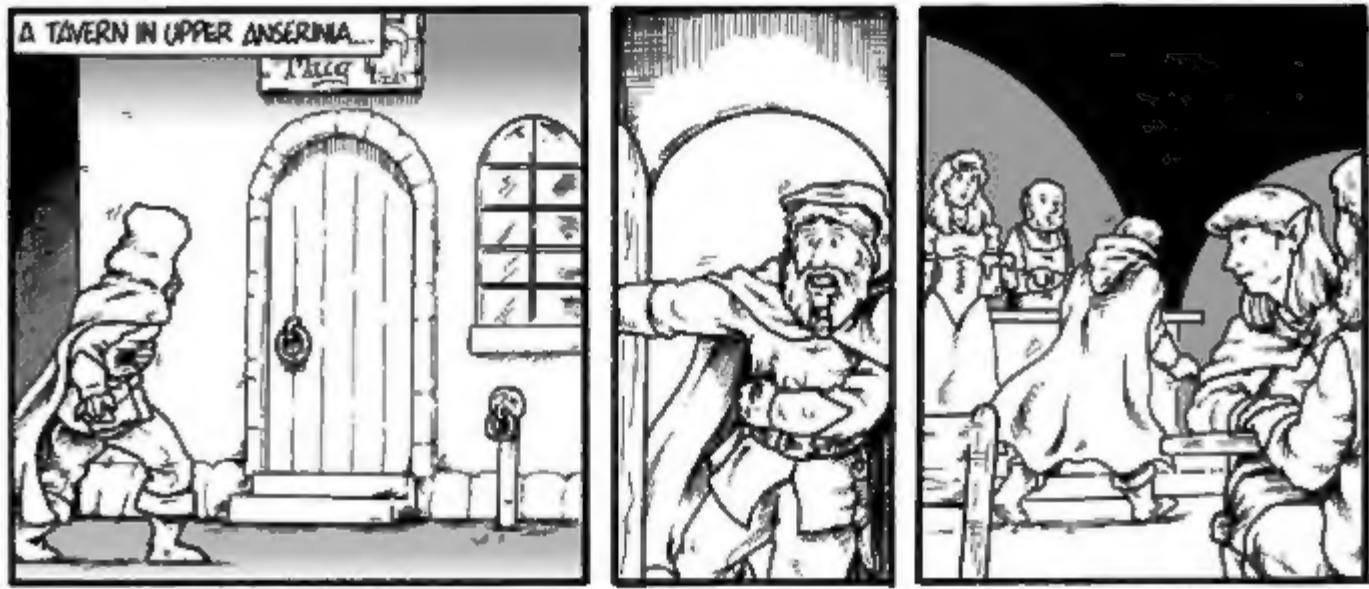




Nodwick™



THE TIDES OF WAR



Nodwick

by *Alexan*

in:

THE TIDES of WAR

...AND ALL WE KNOW IS THAT THE ORCISH ARMY IS COMING TO RAVAGE MY KINGDOM, PERHAPS MOVING INTO BORDERING LANDS. I CANNOT AFFORD TO SPARE ANY OF MY MEAGER FORCES TO ENGAGE THEM...

SO I WISH TO HIRE YOU TO TRY AND HALT THEIR PROGRESS. I HEAR TELL THAT YOU ARE A RESOURCEFUL GROUP.

YOU WANT THE THREE-AND-A-HALF OF US TO STOP A WAR?

CONGRATS, NODWICK! YOU'VE BEEN PROMOTED!

WHY THE HECK DID YOU PUT "WARS AHOY" ON YOUR BUSINESS CARDS, ANYWAY?

WHY ARE THE ORCS SO PEVEED AT YOU, QUEEN BERTHA?

I DON'T KNOW. WE'VE NEVER HAD A PROBLEM WITH THEM BEFORE...



CENTURIES AGO, MY ANCESTOR, KING LEOPOLD INGLEBRECHT IX, MADE PEACE WITH THE ORCISH TRIBES AFTER A PROTRACTED CONFLICT. IN FACT, MY KINGDOM ENCOMPASSES THE LANDS THAT THE ORCS CAPTURED DURING THE WAR.

THESE RELICS SURROUNDING THE MAP ARE TROPHIES TAKEN FROM VARIOUS BATTLES FOUGHT BY LEOPOLD HIMSELF!

WHO RULES LOWER ANSERINTIA?



THAT WOULD BE MY BROTHER, EDDIE. WHEN LEOPOLD MADE PEACE WITH THE ORCS, THE TREATY STIPULATED THAT THE HOUSE OF INGLEBRECHT MUST RULE A DIVIDED KINGDOM. EDDIE AND I ARE THE LAST OF THE INGLEBRECHTS.

UH...SO, WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU BOTH SHUFFLE OFF THIS MORTAL CROWN?

WITH NO HEIRS, I SUPPOSE CHAOS WILL REIGAL.

WELL, AT LEAST SOMEONE WILL BE IN CHARGE...



YOU SAID THAT A SCOUT BROUGHT NEWS OF THE ORCISH THREAT?

YES. HE WAS ON A MISSION FOR MY BROTHER EDDIE. EDDIE LIKES TO KEEP TABS ON OUR NEIGHBORS.

SADLY, THE SCOUT DIED SHORTLY AFTER SENDING HIS REPORT TO LOWER ANSERINTIA VIA MESSENGER. EDDIE HAD THE REPORT MADE KNOWN TO ME MERE HOURS AFTER RECEIVING IT.

SO, CAN WE SEE THE SCOUT?

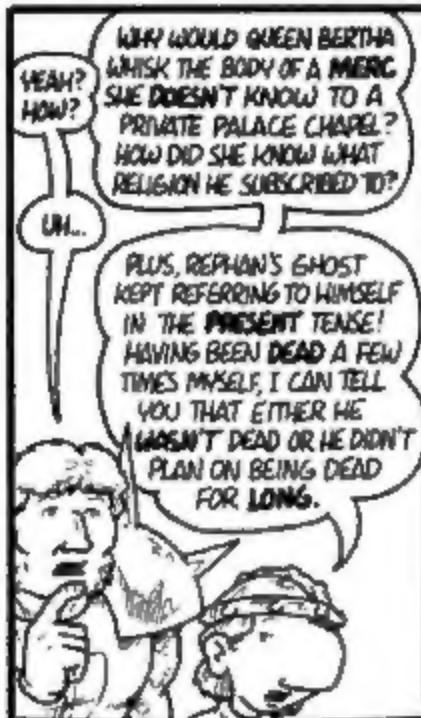
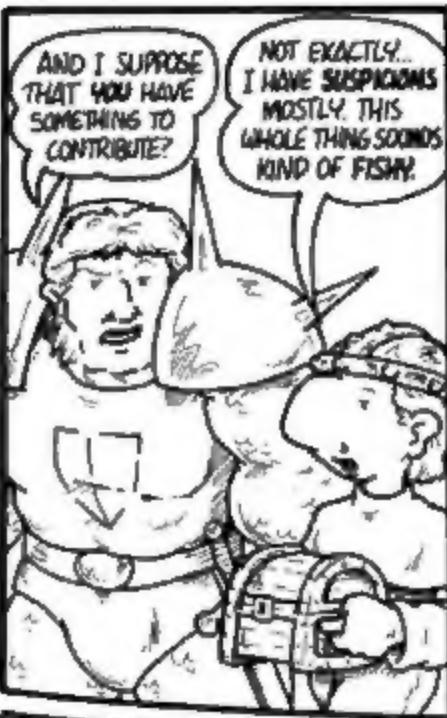
ER, I DID MENTION THAT HE'S DEAD, DIDN'T I?

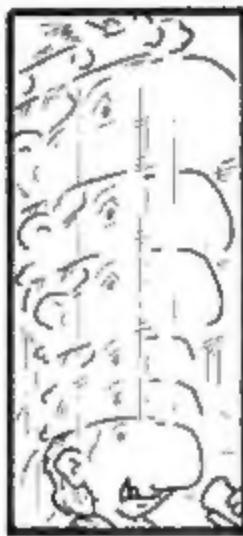
NOT A PROBLEM!

AH, WELL, I'LL HAVE MY LORD CHAMBERLAIN SHOW YOU THE WAY.







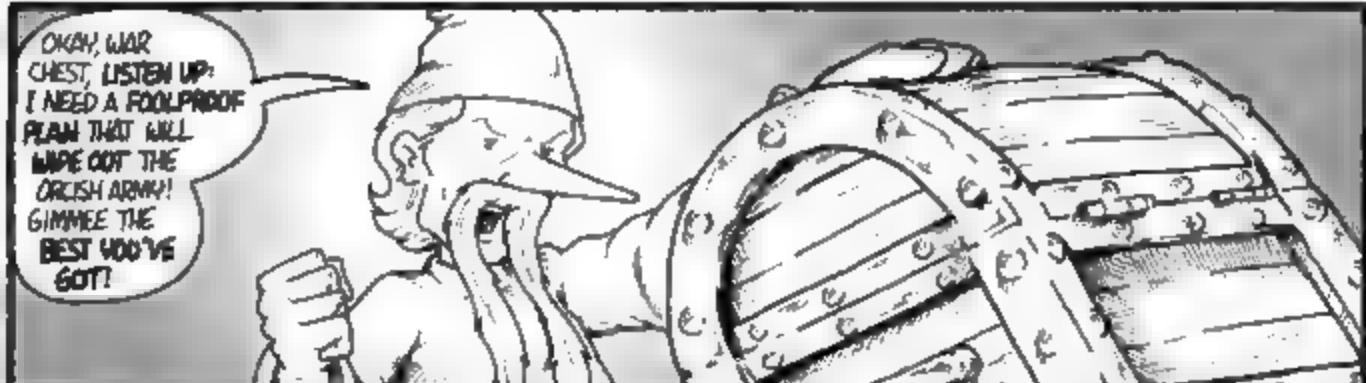




SEVERAL FRANTIC FOOTFALLS LATER...







PLAN 3

ONE: PUSH
RED BUTTON.
TWO: DUCK AND COVER.
CAUTION:
SIDE EFFECTS
MAY INCLUDE
ROWING BANDS OF BLOODYHARDY
MUTANTS...

FIND
A DIFFERENT
PLAN!!

WHERE DID
YOU GET THIS
"WAR CHEST,"
ANARCH?

AND IT
CAME TO YOU
LIKE THIS?

WELL, I
SENT AWAY
FOR IT.

UH, NOT EXACTLY.
IT CAME IN A BOX
LABELED "SOME
ASSEMBLY REQUIRED."

HEY, IT'S NOT
MY FAULT THAT THE
INSTRUCTIONS WERE IN
HEIROGLYPHICS!

WHAT'S THAT
UNDER THE FINE
PRINT?

I THINK
IT'S A TECHNICAL
SUPPORT
HOTLINE.

OKAY, READ IT
OFF TO ME AND
WE'LL GET SOME
EXPORT
ADVICE.

HELLO AND WELCOME BACK TO WAR TALK ON M.P.R.™ WITH US, CLANK AND CLANK, THE SMASHIT BROTHERS, BETTER KNOWN AS TOM AND RAY MARCHANARROW! HELLO, YOU'RE ON WAR TALK!

HI! THIS IS HANNIBAL

IS THAT HANNIBAL WITH ONE "H" OR TWO?

TWO.

AH! YOU MUST BE A CARTHAGINIAN! WHAT'S UP?

WELL, I'M LOOKING TO SACK A CIV-STATE. I CAN'T SAY WHICH ONE, CAUSE THEY MIGHT HEAR ABOUT MY PLANS.

UNDERSTANDABLE. I'M THE SAME WAY ABOUT MY EX-WIFE!

*MULTIVERSAL PUBLIC RADIO.

YEAH, SO I NEED TO GET OVER A BUNCH OF MOUNTAINS 'N STUFF, AND I WANT TO USE A DEVASTATING FRONTAL ASSAULT IN BATTLE. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

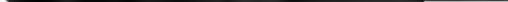
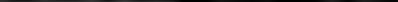
WELL, TOMMY'S BREATH AFTER LUNCH SHOULD DO THE TRICK!

GIVE ME A MEAT-BALL AND GARLIC ON RYE, AND I'LL LEVEL THOSE MOUNTAINS AND KNOCK YOUR ENEMY OUT THREE LEGIONS DEEP!

SERIOUSLY THOUGH, I THINK YOU NEED TO GO THE S.U.V. ROUTE. GET YOURSELF SOME ELEPHANTS.

ELEPHANTS? REALLY?

SURE! THEY CAN KNOCK STUFF DOWN, AND THEY CAN RUN OVER ANYTHING.



PLUS, IF THEY GET KILLED, YOU CAN HAVE A HUGE BAR-B-QUE AND GO INTO THE MORY TRADE. OKAY?

SOUNDS GOOD. THANKS GUYS!

Y'KNOW, IF HE EVER HAS TO HIDE FROM SOMEONE, HE CAN DISGUISE HIS ARMY AS A TRAVELLING CIRCUS!

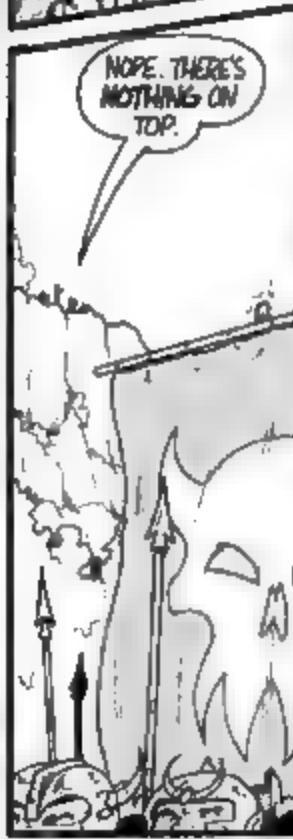
I'M NOT EVEN GOING TO WASTE A DOPE SLAP ON YOU FOR THAT ONE.

HELLO, YOU'RE ON WAR TALK!

GREETINGS! THIS IS ARTAX.

I DIDN'T KNOW THAT THE KING WAS TAXING "R'S" THIS YEAR! I THOUGHT WE WERE STILL ON "P!"





THAT'S
WHY THEY'RE
ON THE WARRPATH?
SOMEONE SNATCHED
A 6700-EI-INS
SKULL?!

PROBABLY THE ONLY OTHER
THING THOSE ICONS GET USED
FOR IS AS A GIFT TO THE CHIEF'S
FIANCÉ. THE CHIEF STILL
USES IT WHEN HE GOES OUT
TO INVADE STUFF. I GUESS
IT'S SUPPOSED TO REMIND
HIM ABOUT WHAT HE HAS
WAITIN' FOR HIM AT HOME!

SO, IF IT'S MISSING,
YOU CAN PROBABLY
STOP THE WAR BY
FINDING THE BATTLE
TOTEM AND RETURNING IT.
GOOD LUCK!

NO PROBLEM!
BYE!

AH, THEY'RE
DONE FOR!

AT LEAST
THEY WON'T
CALL BACK TO
COMPLAIN!

UH...
THANKS



OKAY, IT'S TIME TO TAKE A
SHORT BREAK. WHEN WE RETURN I'LL
REVEAL THE ANSWER TO LAST WEEK'S
PUZZLER. DO YOU REMEMBER IT, TOMMY?

I'LL GIVE YOU
A HINT: IT INVOLVED
A CATAPULT, A GREASED
ROPE AND A MONKEY.
WE'LL BE RIGHT BACK.
STAY TUNED!

WE HAD A PUZZLER
LAST WEEK?

THAT
WAS A BIG
HELP!

DO WE GO
BACK TO THE
WAR CHEST?

WAY AHEAD OF
YOU, PIF. MEET
PLAN FOUR.

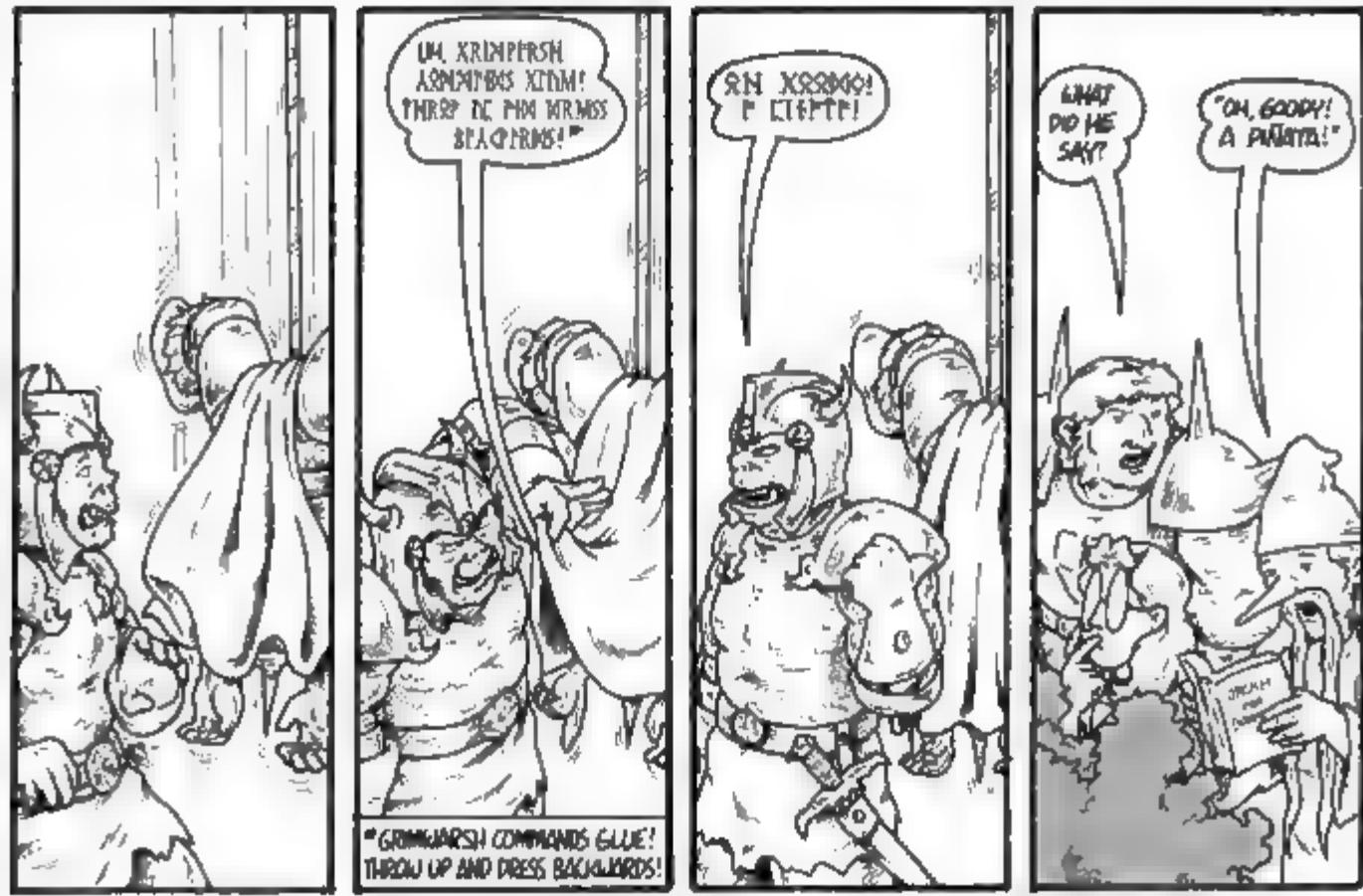
HMM... SAY,
PIFFANY? DO YOU
KNOW WHICH GOD THE
CRIES WORSHIP?

SURE. IT'S
AN ICY GOD
NAMED
GRIMMARSH.
WAH?

HE'S ABOUT
TO MAKE AN
APPEARANCE.









I ASSURE YOU, CHIEF KURS, THAT I HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO IDEA WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT!

AND I ASSURE YOU, KURS, THAT I WILL BROOK NO AGGRESSION AGAINST MY SISTER'S LANDS! MY FORCES ARE MASSING AS WE SPEAK!

AS YOU SEE, I AM NOT CAUGHT UNAWARES! KING INGLEBRECHT'S SCOUT BROUGHT NEWS OF YOUR ARMY. WE ARE PREPARED FOR YOUR HORDES.



OH, BRA-MO! YOU'RE A GREAT ACTOR, CHIEF! YOU'RE NOT BAD, EITHER. KING EDDIE, I'M AFRAID THAT QUEEN BERTHA NEEDS TO SPEND MORE TIME IN SUMMER STOCK THEATER IF SHE EVER WANTS TO FOOL ANYONE.

WHAT? YOU DARE TO ACCUSE ME OF Duplicity?!

OKAY, EVERYONE POP SOME ASPIRIN; THIS IS GOING TO GET A LITTLE COMPLICATED.

PIFFAN, TAKE SOME NOTES, IF YOU PLEASE!

ORIGINALLY, THE KING HERE SENT REPHAN TO KILL KURG. REPHAN IS, IN REALITY, AN ASSASSIN. I FIGURED IT OUT WHEN I REALIZED THAT HE WAS FIGHTING DEATH BY USING A RARE POISON. ONLY A PROFESSIONAL KILLER WOULD HAVE ACCESS TO SUCH CHEMICALS. HE WAS HIRED TO OFF KURG AND FRAME THE QUEEN. THE ORCS WOULD'VE INVADED, AND KING EDDIE WOULD BE FREE TO MOVE IN, DRIVING OUT THE ORCS AND RULING A NEWLY UNITED ANSERTHIA.

HOWEVER, KING-BOY DIDN'T KNOW THAT REPHAN WAS IN QUEEN BERTHA'S EMPLOY. REPHAN REVEALED THE KING'S PLAN TO HER, AND SHE MODIFIED IT. SHE HAD HIM SWIPE THE WAR TOTEM, MAKING IT SEEM LIKE HER BROTHER WANTED A WAR TO SEIZE HER LANDS. THIS WOULD GIVE HER JUST CAUSE TO TURN HER FORCES ON HER BROTHER WITH A NEW ALLY.

CHIEF KURG. HE, TOO, WAS PART OF THIS SCHEME. HE ALLOWED THE THEFT OF HIS TOTEM BECAUSE IT WAS THE ONLY WAY HE COULD GET IT TO HIS BRIDE. ORCS GIVE THESE TOTEMS TO THOSE THEY WANT TO MARRY. NOW, AN OPEN MARRIAGE BETWEEN AN ORC AND A HUMAN WOULD BE UNACCEPTABLE TO BOTH RACES, UNLESS...

THE MARRIAGE WAS USED TO SEAL A TREATY TO END A PROTRACTED WAR. A TREATY THAT WOULD UNITE TWO KINGDOMS AND THE ORCISH TRIBAL LANDS UNDER ONE HOUSE.

A HOUSE RULED BY KING KURG AND QUEEN INGLEBRECHT!



NOT TO MAKE THINGS EVEN MORE CONFUSING, BUT... WHO THE HECK IS THIS?

JULES? WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

WELL, TO BE PERFECTLY FRANK, I WAS PLANNING ON DRUGGING REPHAN AFTER HE BECAME KING, AND THEN MY SECRET SOCIETY COULD RULE ANSERINA FROM THE SHADOWS.

IS USURPING ROYALTY THE NATIONAL SPORT AROUND HERE?

LET'S FIND OUT.

EXCUSE ME! IF ANYONE IS PLANNING TO STAGE A COUP, TOPILE THE GOVERNMENT, OR IN SOME WAY MANIPULATE THE RULING CLASS, WOULD YOU PLEASE RAISE YOUR HAND?

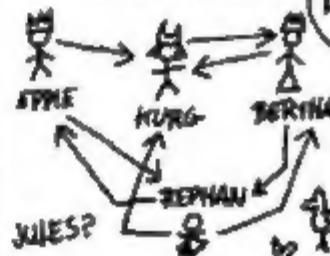
AT LEAST THEY HAVE A HOBBY...

IF YOU'RE SERIOUS ABOUT IT, GETHER BUTTS UP HERE AND TAKE A NUMBER!

PIFFAN, WELL HAVE EVEN MORE CONSPIRATORS TO ADD TO THE CHART.

OH, I GAVE UP WHEN JULES ARRIVED. I'M JUST GOING TO DRAW SOME DUCKIES AND BUNNIES FOR AWHILE.

THE CONSPIRACY





WHO WANTS TO BE A TYRANT?



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